



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1380.0.55.001 - Perspectives on Regional Australia: Women's Employment in Urban, Rural and Regional Australia, 2001 Census, 2001

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## Summary

### Main Features

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION

Employment is an important contributor to overall wellbeing and quality of life. Employment-related income is a key determinant of the capacity of individuals and households to meet the needs of daily life and employment itself is a means by which individuals may learn and apply new skills, gain access to social networks and develop a sense of self worth (ABS, 2004d).

Across all regions of Australia women contribute substantially to their local economies through their participation in the labour force. The nature and extent of this contribution has changed considerably over the last few decades as a result of various economic and social changes. For example, since the early 1970s laws have been changed to remove marriage bars from employment (e.g. in the Australian Public Service), equal pay rights have been granted and the Sex Discrimination Act has been widely promulgated. Structural changes in the economy, particularly the growth of service industries (increasing the availability of casual and part-time work), flexible working arrangements and increased access to child-care have allowed more women to enter the workforce or to combine work with family responsibilities (ABS, 2003b). In addition, Australian families have become more reliant on dual incomes for their economic wellbeing (ABS, 2003a).

Women residing in rural and regional Australia may face additional employment challenges to those faced by women in urban areas. Employment opportunities for women in these areas may not be as frequent or varied as a result of smaller and less diverse local economies.

This publication explores differences in women's employment across urban and rural areas of Australia and highlights some of the characteristics of women as they relate to the labour force, including full-time and part-time employment, age, industry of employment and post-school qualifications. The data are drawn mainly from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing and represent a snapshot of employed women aged 15-64 years at that point in time. Some comparisons are made with results from earlier Censuses.

The geographical areas used in this analysis have been derived from the '**Section of State' (SOS) Structure** contained in the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC), Volume 1, 2001** (cat. no. 1216.0). The Section of State structure divides Australia into various types of urban and rural areas, on the basis of population size.

For the purposes of this report, the following categories have been used to compare women's employment patterns in urban and rural areas. The data for these geographic categories are based on where people were located on Census night (i.e. place of enumeration), which may not necessarily correspond to where they usually live (i.e. place of usual residence).

- Major urban - urban centres with a population exceeding 100,000 persons (Major urban in the SOS Structure),
- Medium townships-towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 20,000 to 99,999 persons (part of Other urban in the SOS Structure),
- Small townships - towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 1,000 to 19,999 persons (part of Other urban in the SOS Structure), and
- Rural areas - the remainder of Australia which includes towns with a population in the range 200 to 999 persons (Bounded localities in the SOS Structure) and all other rural areas including towns with a population less than 200 persons (Rural balance in the SOS Structure).

While this paper focuses on these four broad geographic categories, it is important to note that employment patterns may vary widely between towns or regions within the same category, depending on local economic and labour market conditions. For example, while the unemployment rate for women in Medium townships may be relatively high overall, individual towns in this category will have relatively low rates of unemployment, while others will have relatively high rates. The impact of local conditions should therefore be accounted for when making assumptions, based on this publication, about individual towns.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Based on results from the 2001 Census:-

- Women in Major urban areas are more likely to have higher educational qualifications, have the highest labour force participation rate, are least likely to be self-employed, and are less likely to be working part-time.
- Women in Rural areas are least likely to be unemployed, and most likely to be self-employed, with almost half working in agriculture.

Specifically:-

- In 2001, the labour force participation rate for women aged 15-64 years in Australia was 65.3%, compared to 80.4% for men. Small townships had the lowest labour force participation rate for women (61.1%), compared with 66.6% in Major urban centres.
- Between 1991 and 2001 female labour force participation rates increased in each of the four broad geographical regions defined in this report.
- The unemployment rate for women aged 15-64 years across Australia was 6.7% in 2001, which was 1.4 percentage points lower than the rate for men similarly aged (8.1%). Highest rates of female unemployment were observed in Medium townships (8.2%) and Small townships (7.8%), compared to 5.8% in Rural areas.
- Small townships had the highest proportion of part-time employed women (54.3%) compared with 51.9% in Rural areas and 46.5% in Major urban centres.
- In each of the four areas defined in this report, Retail trade and Health and community services were the main industries in which women aged 15-64 years worked.
- The proportion of self-employed women in Rural areas (25.3%) in 2001 was more than double the proportion in Major urban centres (10.2%).
- One quarter of employed women aged 15-64 years in Major urban centres had a University degree compared with around 17% for both Medium townships and Rural areas and 15.7% in Small townships.

## **About this Release**

### **ABOUT THIS RELEASE**

This publication is the first of a series of reports analysing a range of topics with a particular focus on Regional Australia. In this issue data from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing has been used to present some perspectives on the characteristics of women in employment in urban, rural and regional Australia.

In recent years economic pressures from global, as well as local, influences have had a significant impact on the availability and nature of employment in many rural and regional areas. Women throughout regional Australia contribute substantially to their regional economies through their participation in the labour force, yet they face considerably different employment considerations and opportunities than do women in urban areas.

This paper provides an insight into the different employment conditions experienced by women in regional Australia by examining characteristics such as age, employment status, income, qualifications and industry of employment. The data is presented using the geographic classification "Section of State" which enables comparisons in employment patterns across major urban cities, medium townships, small townships and rural areas of Australia.

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## Explanatory Notes

### Glossary

The data presented in this electronic publication are drawn from the Census of Population and Housing. Definitions for the main data items are included in the Glossary below. Further information can be obtained from the Census dictionaries relevant to each Census year (ABS cat. no. 2901.0).

#### Calculation of proportions

Unless otherwise indicated, 'Not stated' and 'Inadequately described' categories have been excluded from the denominator when calculating the proportion of the population with a particular characteristic.

#### Contributing family worker

A person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative. (Previously entitled unpaid family helper).

#### Discouraged job seeker

A person with a marginal attachment to the labour force who wanted to work and were available to start work but whose main reason for not actively looking for work was that they believed they would not find a job.

#### Employed persons

Refers to persons who had a full-time or part-time job of any kind in the week prior to Census night. A 'job' refers to any type of work, including casual or temporary work or part-time work, if it was for one hour or more, and includes persons who:

- worked for payment or profit, or as an unpaid helper in a family business;
- had a job from which they were on leave or otherwise temporarily absent;
- were on strike or stood down temporarily.

## **Employee**

A person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages or salary; or is paid a retainer fee by his/her employer and works on a commission basis; or works for an employer for tips, piece-rates or payment in kind; or is a person who operated his/her own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees.

## **Employer**

A person who operates his/her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in trade, and hires one or more employees.

## **Full-time workers**

For Census purposes a person is considered to be working full-time if they worked 35 hours or more, in all jobs, during the week prior to Census night.

## **Goods producing industries**

Goods-producing industries include the following divisions of the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), 1993** (cat. no. 1292.0): Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Mining; Manufacturing; Electricity, gas and water supply; and Construction.

## **Industry**

Industry has been classified according to the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), 1993** (cat. no. 1292.0).

## **Labour force**

The labour force is made up of employed and unemployed people aged 15 years and over. Persons who are neither employed nor unemployed are classified as 'not in the labour force' (includes people who were retired, pensioners and people engaged solely in home duties).

## **Labour force participation rate**

The number of persons in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over, excluding persons who did not state their labour force status.

## **Major urban**

Urban centres with a population exceeding 100,000 persons ('Major urban' in the SOS Structure).

## **Medium townships**

Towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 20,000 to 99,999 persons (part of 'Other urban' in the SOS Structure).

## **Migratory areas**

Covers people who were enumerated in the Census on off-shore oil rigs, drilling platforms and the like, aboard ships in Australian waters or on an overnight journey by train or bus and by definition are not allocated to a particular SOS category.

## **Own account workers**

A person who operates his or her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees (this category was formerly entitled self-employed).

## **Part-time workers**

For Census purposes a person is considered to be working part-time if they worked 34 hours or less, in all jobs, during the week prior to Census night.

## **Post-school qualification**

Describes the level of a person's highest completed non-school qualification and is classified to the **Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001** (cat. no. 1272.0).

## **Rural areas**

Rural areas include towns with a population in the range 200 to 999 persons ('Bounded localities' in the SOS Structure) and the remainder of Australia ('Rural balance' in the SOS Structure).

## **Section of state (SOS) structure**

The geographical areas used in this publication have been derived from the Section of State (SOS) Structure contained in the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC), Volume 1, 2001** (cat. no. 1216.0)

The Section of State (SOS) Structure uses population counts from the Census of Population and Housing to classify Census Collection Districts (CD) as urban or rural. The SOS then represents an aggregation of non-contiguous geographical areas of particular urban/rural CDs in particular size groups. The Section of State categories are:

Major Urban - population clusters of 100,000 or more. Comprises all of the capital cities excluding Darwin, together with a number of other large urban centres such as Newcastle, Gold Coast, Wollongong, Geelong, Townsville, Central Coast and Sunshine Coast).

Other Urban (A) - population clusters in the range 20,000 to 99,999. Includes large regional centres such as Cairns, Ballarat, Bunbury, Tamworth, Dubbo, Warnambool, Mackay, etc. Darwin is also included in this category.

Other Urban (B) - population clusters in the range 1,000 to 19,999. Includes a range of diverse towns such as Ballina and Cootamundra (NSW), Bacchus Marsh and Lakes Entrance (Vic), Nambour and Mareeba (Qld), Karratha and Northam (WA), Murray Bridge and Naracoorte (SA), Ulverstone and New Norfolk (Tas) and Katherine and Nhulunbuy (NT).

Bounded Locality - all population clusters of 200 to 999 people.

Rural Balance - the remainder of Australia. Note: there is a great diversity within this category as it includes those living on small rural allotments within commuting distance of Major Urban centres as well as farms and other property throughout Australia.

Migratory - includes persons counted in the census on off-shore oil rigs, drilling platforms and the like, aboard ships in Australian waters or on an overnight journey by train or bus.

### **Self-employed**

For the purposes of this report self-employed persons have been defined to include Employers, Own account Workers and Contributing Family Workers.

### **Service industries**

Service industries include the following divisions of the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), 1993** (cat. no. 1292.0): Wholesale trade; Retail trade; Accommodation, cafes and restaurants; Transport and storage; Communication services; Finance and insurance; Property and business services; Government administration and defence; Education; Health and community services; Cultural and recreational services; and Personal and other services.

### **Small townships**

Towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 1,000 to 19,999 persons (part of 'Other urban' in the SOS Structure).

### **Unemployed**

Refers to persons who did not have a job in the week prior to Census night but had actively looked for work in the last four weeks and were available to start work.

### **Unemployment rate**

For any group, the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force in the same group.

# Appendix

## APPENDIX LIST OF REFERENCES

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